

**Cumulative Effects on the United States Military Academy
National Historic Landmark District Since 1960**

By

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Abstract

The United States Military Academy, located at West Point, New York is an American icon. It was the first military academy to be established (1802), and became a National Historic Landmark District in 1960. This designation occurred six years before the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 was created. Three years later, in 1969, the National Historic Policy Act was signed into law. Beginning with the designation as a National Historic Landmark District, the cumulative effects of changes to the academy can be divided into three distinct periods: 1960-1969; 1969-1996; and post 1996. The first period pre-dated the National Environmental Policy Act, where new construction, rehabilitation, and demolition underwent only limited environmental review. The second period, after the enactment of the National Environmental Policy Act, held any changes to the Landmark District to a higher (stricter) standard. The third period, which began in 1996, was an era where specific procedures and methodologies were established to carry out the National Environmental Policy Act. A detailed environmental program was developed during this period to assess all proposed changes (new construction, rehabilitation and demolition) to the Landmark District, no matter how small. In addition to the environmental effects, the visual effects on the Landmark District were also evaluated. This paper describes how the cumulative impact of new construction, rehabilitation and demolition since 1960 has affected the Landmark District.

Background

The United States Military Academy stands as one of America's great icons. Located on the Hudson River in New York's Hudson Highlands region, it dates back to the Revolutionary War, when it was established as an Army post in January of 1778. Its location was key in preventing the British from controlling the Hudson River. Continental soldiers constructed forts, batteries and redoubts, and built a 100-ton chain that crossed the Hudson River from West Point to Constitution Island, the narrowest area of the Hudson River. The post continues, today, as an active Army post, America's oldest continuously occupied military installation.

After the war, a number of soldiers and legislators, desiring not to rely on foreign engineers, urged the creation of an institution that would be devoted to art and science of warfare. In 1802, President Thomas Jefferson signed legislation establishing the United States Military Academy (Academy). In 1817, Colonel Sylvanus Thayer, known as the "father of the Military Academy," upgraded academic standards, and instilled military discipline and honorable conduct. It is America's oldest military academy.

The Academy is located in New York State's Hudson Highlands, a Scenic Area of Statewide Significance. In the mid-19th century, a group of landscape painters established what was known as the Hudson River School. The school's paintings reflected three themes of America in the 19th century – discovery, exploration and settlement. The region of the Hudson Highlands, which included the Academy, was especially popular with the artists, as they depicted the ruggedness and sublimity of the region.

The Academy continued to develop through the latter half of the 19th century and into the 20th century. Many of the old wooden buildings were replaced with granite structures.

The vast majority of the Academy campus is military gothic, which are massive fortress-like structures. Other buildings on the post, most notably the oldest private residences, were built in the Federal, Georgian and English Tudor styles. Some of these residences date back to the early 19th century.

As the Corps of Cadets grew, over the years tents were replaced by barracks, first made of wood, later by granite. Barracks and academic buildings were set back from a level area called The Plain. The Plain is the area on Academy grounds where the cadets ‘form up’ then march in review. In the past, when the Corps of Cadets was small, tents were erected on The Plain, and recreation areas were also set up. Doubleday Field, where baseball is played, was dedicated in 1939. Eventually, The Plain became ‘sacred’ and was only used for formal cadet formations and passing in review before ranking military officials.

It was in the early 20th century that many of the military gothic (granite) structures that still stand today were erected, mainly during the period 1905-1915. As seen from the Hudson River, the Academy takes on the appearance of a fortress, with several massive granite structures rising from its banks. As seen from the east side of the river, additional massive structures are evident, including the main academic building, just off The Plain, and the Cadet Chapel, which rises high above The Plain. The latest granite structure to be built at the academy is the new cadet library, erected on a portion of The Plain.

Many other buildings and structures, as well as scenic vistas and roadways make up the main academic area of academy’s total 16,000 acres. (Most of the Academy’s land is given to training, both infantry and artillery.) The main academic (central) area, however, only occupies 2,500 acres, and lies to the east of New York State Route 9W, a scenic byway (the training areas lie to the west). In 1960, the academic area, also known as the central area, was designated a National Historic Landmark District because of its Revolutionary War ruins and the historic significance of the Academy itself. Most of the buildings and structures are historic. It is noted that the Landmark District comprises more than the Corps of Cadets barracks and academic areas. Also included are residential areas where

instructors and their families (including military and academic) live, medical facilities, public works facilities, and both intercollegiate and intramural athletic facilities. In addition, the central area is home to numerous monuments and statues. It is interesting to note, that this designation came six years before the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 was signed.

This paper will describe some of the more significant changes that have taken place since 1960, and their effect on the National Historic Landmark District. Some of these changes pre-date not only the National Historic Preservation Act, but also the National Environmental Policy Act, signed January 1, 1970. As a result, many of the changes didn't receive the environmental scrutiny that a change, today, would make. This paper presents three distinct periods of change since 1960.

The Period from 1960 through 1969

This is the initial period after the central area was designated a National Historic Landmark District. This period was marked by a major expansion of the Corps of Cadets. As a result of the war in Viet Nam, the Corps grew to over 4,000 cadets. With this increase, the need arose for larger barracks, more housing for instructors, additional classrooms, more space for athletic facilities. Each of these changes had an impact upon the Landmark District in some way. However, because neither the National Historic Preservation Act nor the National Environmental Policy Act were in effect during this period, historic effect analysis and environmental impact assessment of the changes were not given due diligence.

Three primary roads are used to access the central area, Thayer Road from the south, and Stony Lonesome and Washington Roads from the west, and all hold historic significance. Thayer Road is the main road to the central area, and is accessed from the south by passing through the Village of Highland Falls. Along it are the Historic Hotel Thayer, Buffalo Soldiers Field (formerly called Cavalry Plain), historic residences of military

instructors, and the historic academic (central) area. The changes that were made along this route were primarily to Cavalry Plain, where intramural athletic fields were created, changing the visual landscape of the scenic Thayer Road corridor.

Major changes during this period were the additions to the intercollegiate football stadium (Michie Stadium). Originally constructed in 1923-24, the stadium was shaped like a horseshoe, open to the east, with a view of Lusk Reservoir, water supply to the central area. It also offered a scenic view of the trees lining the reservoir, and the east bank of the Hudson River. In the late 1960s the east stands were added to Michie Stadium, completely encircling the football field. During the same time, upper seating was added to the west stands. The National Historic Preservation Act was in place at this time, so in response, the architecture closely followed the existing 1923-24 architecture of the original stadium.

Changes also started to take place on The Plain: 1) reviewing stands were erected, not only for the 'top brass,' but for visitors; 2) parking areas were created for visitors; 3) additional monuments and statues were erected; 4) athletic facilities for rugby and tennis were added in the northeast portion of The Plain; and 5) a monument, honoring General Douglas MacArthur was also added to The Plain. The large area of The Plain that remained is called The Parade. While these new features impacted the scenic view from The Plain and academic area toward the Hudson Highlands, they did not affect the view from the Hudson River, nor the view from the area of The Plain called Trophy Point towards the North Gate of the Hudson Highlands. Here, on display, are remnants (canons) from various wars, as well as links from the great chain that spanned the Hudson River from West Point to Constitution Island.

New residences were also built during this period to house the additional instructors and their families needed to train the increase in the Corps of Cadets. An area called New Brick was built on the hillside to the west of, and away from, Washington Road, one of

the Landmark's three historic corridors. Trees shield the view of the Landmark from Washington Road, as well as from the east side of the Hudson River.

In all, while there were major changes made to the U.S. Military Academy during the 1960s, none of the undertakings had an adverse effect on the Landmark District.

The Period From 1970 to 1996

This period is marked by major changes to the U.S. Military Academy's infrastructure, including a new commissary, new hospital, additional instructional buildings, additional residences, and building to house military police.

In 1972, Stony Lonesome I housing was opened to field grade officers and their families. It became, and still is, the largest residential area in the Landmark District. It was constructed in a wooded area, and is only partly visible from Stony Lonesome Road, one of three historic roads that lead into the heart of the Landmark District. Stony Lonesome I is not visible from either the Hudson River or its east bank. Also constructed along Stony Lonesome Road, but shielded, for the most part, by vegetation, is the new commissary, built in 1989.

In the Central Area, a new academic building was constructed in 1973. It was constructed in military gothic style, and is similar to the surrounding buildings built in the same architectural design. The building, Mahan Hall, contains classrooms and instructors offices. Though the building is not 50 years old, it is designated as a historic structure because of its architecture and its association with the buildings around it. It is visible from the Hudson River, as well as from its east bank. It blends with the surrounding structures and gives the appearance of being a much older building.

A major change to the Landmark District took place in 1974 when Eisenhower Hall was opened. It is the largest theater on the east coast, outside of Radio City Music Hall in New York City, seating 4,400 people. Unfortunately, it was not constructed in architectural style of the surrounding structures. It is entirely visible from the Hudson River, including Constitution Island, and it shields the view of the Hudson Highlands from Washington Road, and especially from the residences of the three generals that oversee the U.S. Military Academy. Little is available on either the environmental or cultural reviews that took place regarding Eisenhower Hall.

Another major change that had a negative impact on the Landmark District was the construction of Keller Army Community Hospital. Constructed just off Washington Road, it is a massive concrete structure with no architectural features that are found in the Central Area. It is entirely visible from the Washington Road historic corridor. It gives the impression of being out of place in an otherwise historic area. It is not, however, visible from the Hudson River, and only slightly visible from the historic houses, buildings and landscapes on the east bank of the Hudson River. Once again, little is known of the environmental and cultural reviews that took place before this structure was built.

In the southern portion of the Landmark District, just inside the Thayer Gate (the southern entrance to the U.S. Military Academy), Cavalry Plain, upon which soldiers trained on horseback, was dedicated Buffalo Soldiers Field. The stables where the horses were kept (on the west side of the field) had been made into offices. On the field the women's intercollegiate softball facility was constructed, adjacent to Thayer Road. On the southwest side of Buffalo Soldiers Field, the facility housing the military police and the provost marshal was constructed. The building, a brick structure with limestone accents, blends into the other brick structures (stables) that encircle Buffalo Soldiers Field, enhancing the Landmark District.

Moving northward along Thayer Road, past Buffalo Soldiers Field and immediately below the Lusk Reservoir dam, the Association of Graduates constructed a facility for their offices and use for special functions. While not constructed in massive granite, it is a brick building with limestone accents that has an attractive architectural style. It is visible from Thayer Road, only.

Just to the southwest of Michie Stadium, and highly visible from both Thayer and Stony Lonesome Roads, is the Holleder Center that houses the Tate Ice (Hockey) Rink and the Crystal (Basketball) Arena. Unlike Michie Stadium, the architecture of the Holleder Center, is modern, with no architectural arches, or other specific architectural features, to enhance the structure and blend with the football stadium. Once again, little is known about the environmental and cultural reviews associated with this facility.

Some positive undertakings took place during this period, most notably the restoration of Fort Putnam, a military garrison during the Revolutionary War. It was completed in 1778 with the purpose of supporting Fort Clinton which sat on the bluff on the edge of the Hudson River. It was rebuilt and enlarged in 1794, but soon fell into disrepair. During the 1970s and 80s it was restored, and is now a major attraction, as it is located at 500 feet above the Hudson River, and 350 above The Plain. It offers one of the best views of the U.S. Military Academy's Central Area.

Another action that took place during this period, though not directly affecting the Landmark District, was the designation of the Hudson River as an American Heritage River. The formal ceremony took place on Trophy Point, with dignitaries from the National Park Service, the State of New York, and the Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy. Such a designation only enhances the U.S. Military Academy's National Historic Landmark District.

The Period from 1996 to Present

This relatively short period has experienced the greatest changes in the history of the Landmark District. Most of the changes have come in the area of athletic facilities: Arvin Gym Renovation; Caufield Crew and Sailing Center; Lichtenberg Tennis Center; Kimsey Athletic Center and Hoffman Press Box at Michie Stadium; Foley Athletic Center (indoor football practice); the Anderson Rugby Center; and many others. All of these facilities were donated by graduates of the U.S. Military Academy.

During this period an Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan was prepared. Army Regulation 200-4 requires its installations to develop such a plan to be used as an internal compliance and management tool that integrates the cultural resources program with the installation mission activities. It is designed to meet the legal compliance requirements of federal historic preservation laws and regulations in a way that is consistent with sound principles of cultural resources stewardship. The US Military Academy's Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan allows for the identification of potential conflicts between its mission and the historic preservation responsibilities, and recommends compliance actions necessary to maintain the mission.

Several significant changes to the Landmark District took place during this period, one of which was the renovation of Arvin Gym. Arvin Gym is the center of cadet physical development. Constructed over a period of nearly 30 years, it was composed of six almost entirely separate gyms. In some areas, there was no physical connection between the gyms. In the late 1990s it was determined that the Arvin Gym was no longer safe and needed to be renovated. Most of the gym was torn down and rebuilt in a style that compliments the original (Hayes) Gym, completed in 1910. The Hayes Gym was the only segment of the Arvin Gym that remained intact. Not only is the new Arvin Physical Development Center 'state-of-the-art,' but its architecture compliments other structures that can be viewed from The Plain.

Another significant change to the Landmark District was the construction of the new Cadet (Jefferson Hall) Library. The Jefferson Hall was built on the southeast corner of The Plain, immediately across the street in front of the old library. It is a six-story building constructed of granite in a style similar to the old library and other surrounding buildings, but with more glass for better lighting. Jefferson Hall was the only undertaking, up to that time, for which an environmental impact statement was prepared. The library was completed in 2008. In some ways the structure enhances the character of the Landmark District because of its architectural style, which is visible from anywhere on The Plain, as well as from the east bank of the Hudson River, particularly at night when it is lighted. It also impacts The Plain, in that it significantly reduces the area of The Plain.

In addition to the renovation of the Arvin Gym, a number of other athletic facilities were constructed during this period. One of the first was a crew and sailing center that replaced the old Quonset structure used as a boathouse. The crew and sailing center, located on the Hudson River, about 150 feet below the level of The Plain on the south side of the South Athletic Field. The center, which opened in 2002 and named after Alex Caufield, was a vast (visual) improvement over the Quonset boathouse. In addition to enhancing the visual aspect of the Landmark District, it provided indoor state-of-the-art rowing racks for the crew team.

Several other facilities were constructed on Hudson River, in an area called the North Athletic Field. The most prominent facility was the Anderson Rugby Center, located on the north end of the field, immediately below the Lee Housing area. Unlike the Crew and Sailing Center, which had a positive impact on the Landmark District, the Rugby Center did not. The north end of the North Athletic Field was a grass area with tall trees on the hillside leading up to the Lee Housing Area. The area was used for casual recreation, and was pleasing to look at from the Hudson River and the east bank. With the construction of the Rugby Center, the grass was replaced with turf, a large portion of the treed slope

was shielded by the grandstands, and tall towers for field lighting were installed. All this gave the impression of a stadium that belonged elsewhere, not in a pastoral setting.

Other athletic facilities that were constructed on the North Athletic Field were a new women's softball field and stadium, a new track and field facility and grandstands, and an equipment storage facility. The North Athletic Field extends for three-quarters mile northward from the Gillis Field House to the north boundary of the U.S. Military Academy boundary. The largest impact on the Landmark District from these three facilities is the field lighting. With timers placed on the light towers the impact was minimized. The storage facility, for the maintenance of the grounds, along with grandstands for the track and field facility, were constructed of brick with limestone accents, a vast improvement from the former facilities.

Other athletic facilities were constructed in the Central Area during this period that visually changed the Landmark District. These facilities were predominantly on, or near, Michie Stadium. The old football stadium underwent many changes, even since the addition of the east stands and upper deck to the west stands. These changes included the addition of an athletic center on the south stands and a large press box atop the west stands. As much as the architect for the athletic center attempted to match the architecture of the existing stadium, the result was a new feature that stood out in contrast to the existing structure. The athletic center is visible from both Stony Lonesome and Thayer Roads (historic corridors), as is the press box. The press box is even more imposing, primarily because of its height above the playing field. It changed the entire look of the football stadium, even more than the athletic center on the south stands.

Just to the south of Michie Stadium, what was formerly a practice field primarily for football, now is home to a full-sized indoor practice field, used by several sports, but mostly football. Its design is modern, and is more in alignment, architecturally, with the Holleder Center than with Michie Stadium. Although it is a large facility, it is only visible close up, from Mills Road (vegetation and terrain shield it on three sides). It is

visible, however, from the lower portion of Stony Lonesome Road and Michie Stadium. Despite its height, it is not visible from the east bank of the Hudson River.

A significant modification was made to Stony Lonesome Road around 2004. Instead of turning south and traveling on the west side of Michie Stadium after descending the hill from the Stony Lonesome Gate, a cutoff was constructed. This cutoff passed between the North end of Michie Stadium and Fort Putnam. This created a significant change in the scenic view of the area. Historically, since the construction of Michie Stadium in 1923, the land between Fort Putnam and Michie Stadium was heavily vegetated, rugged hillside. Except for the east side of the stadium, Lusk Reservoir was surrounded by trees and hillside. The cutoff, which ran from just above Michie Stadium, to Mills Road, a road that runs along the west side of Lusk Reservoir. The visual character was changed, irreparably, and now gives the area the look of a modern highway.

Just south of the Stony Lonesome Gate, on the top of a hill is the Stony Lonesome II housing area. To create the new development, the top of the hill had to be cleared of trees and leveled by blasting and ripping rock. About 20 vertical feet of hill, mostly hard rock, was removed to make room for additional family quarters. Unlike the federal, Georgian or English Tudor style of housing that help make the central area of the academy a National Historic Landmark District, Stony Lonesome II housing was built in a more modern style, using wood frame construction and vinyl siding. While being attractive, it does not have the quaint, old-fashioned appeal of the housing along Thayer and Washington Roads. It can be observed from the east bank of the Hudson River, but is far enough away so as not to detract from the visual quality of the Landmark District, and it is screened by trees and terrain from Stony Lonesome Road.

Two new sports facilities that detract from the visual character of the Landmark District are the indoor tennis center and the volleyball pavilion. Built off Stony Lonesome Road, just above, and to the west of, Fort Putnam, are these two large buildings with bright green metal roofs, that are visible from both the Hudson River, and its east bank. While

needed for intercollegiate athletics, the architectural style of these structures dramatically changed the visual landscape of this portion of the Landmark District.

A major change to the academy grounds came about in 2005 when a number of military installations underwent Base Realignment and Closure. One of the facilities that closed was Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Housed at Fort Monmouth was the US Military Academy Preparatory (Prep) School. In 1946, following the end of World War II, the Army Prep School was established at Stewart Army Air Field in Newburgh, New York. In 1957, the school was moved to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and in 1975, it moved, again, to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. By the end of the 2000 decade, there would no longer be a place for the school.

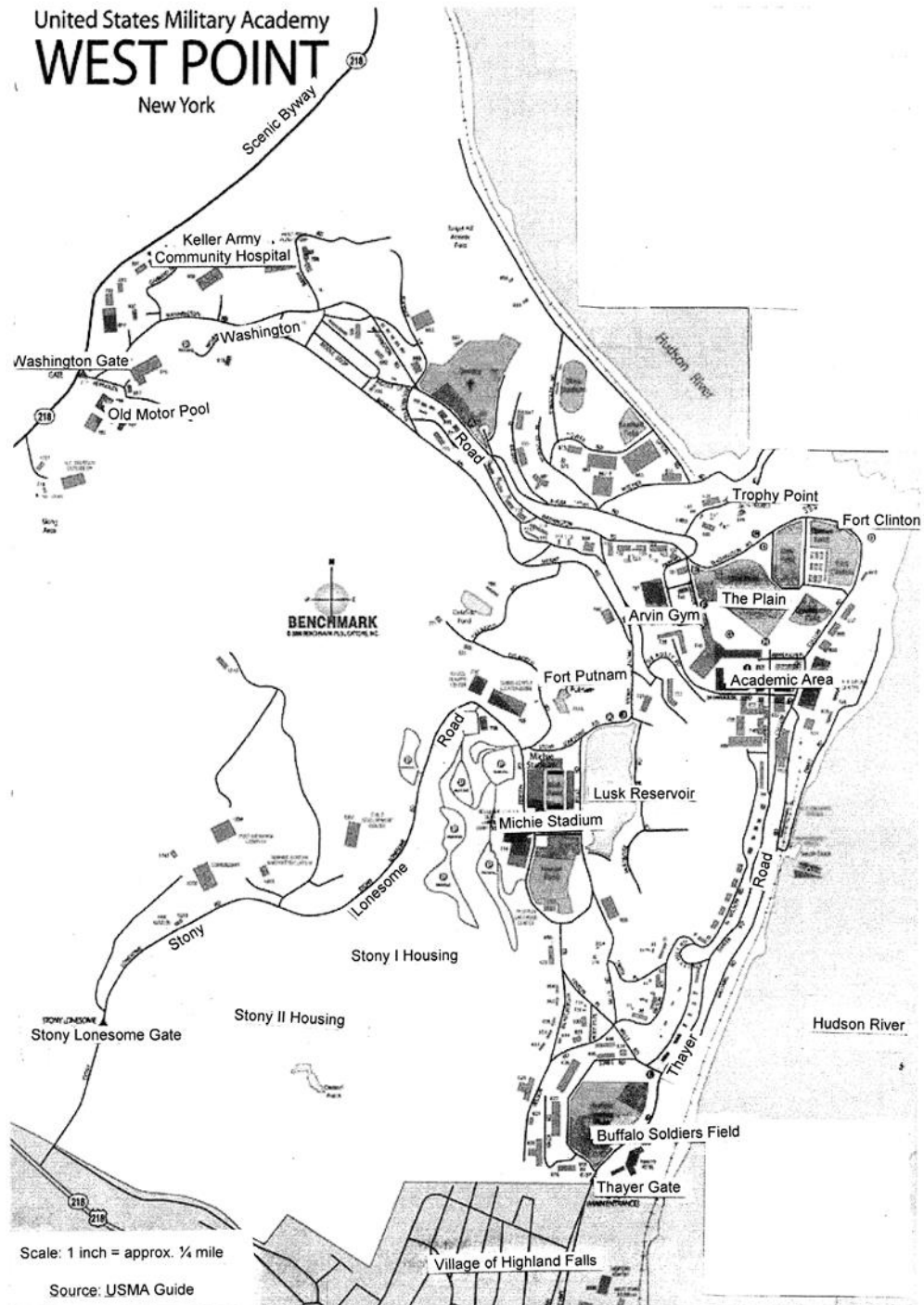
Late in 2005, the US Military Academy began looking at options where to relocate the prep school. After analyzing a number of alternatives, it was decided that the best location for the school would be at the site of the current Motor Pool. The Motor Pool was an industrial area just inside the Washington Gate, off NY Route 218, a historic and Scenic Byway. The Motor Pool, in addition to containing buildings and parking areas, also contained several solid waste landfills used during the 1960s. To make room for the prep school, the Motor Pool would have to be relocated, off the main post to a location about five miles down the road on one of the practice ranges. In addition, the unlined solid waste landfills would have to be reclaimed, and all contaminated soil removed. Groundwater monitoring wells would need to be installed. The prep school, completed in 2011, is of modern institutional design, but not visible from most of the main post or from the Hudson River. The area was changed from an industrial area to a high school campus.

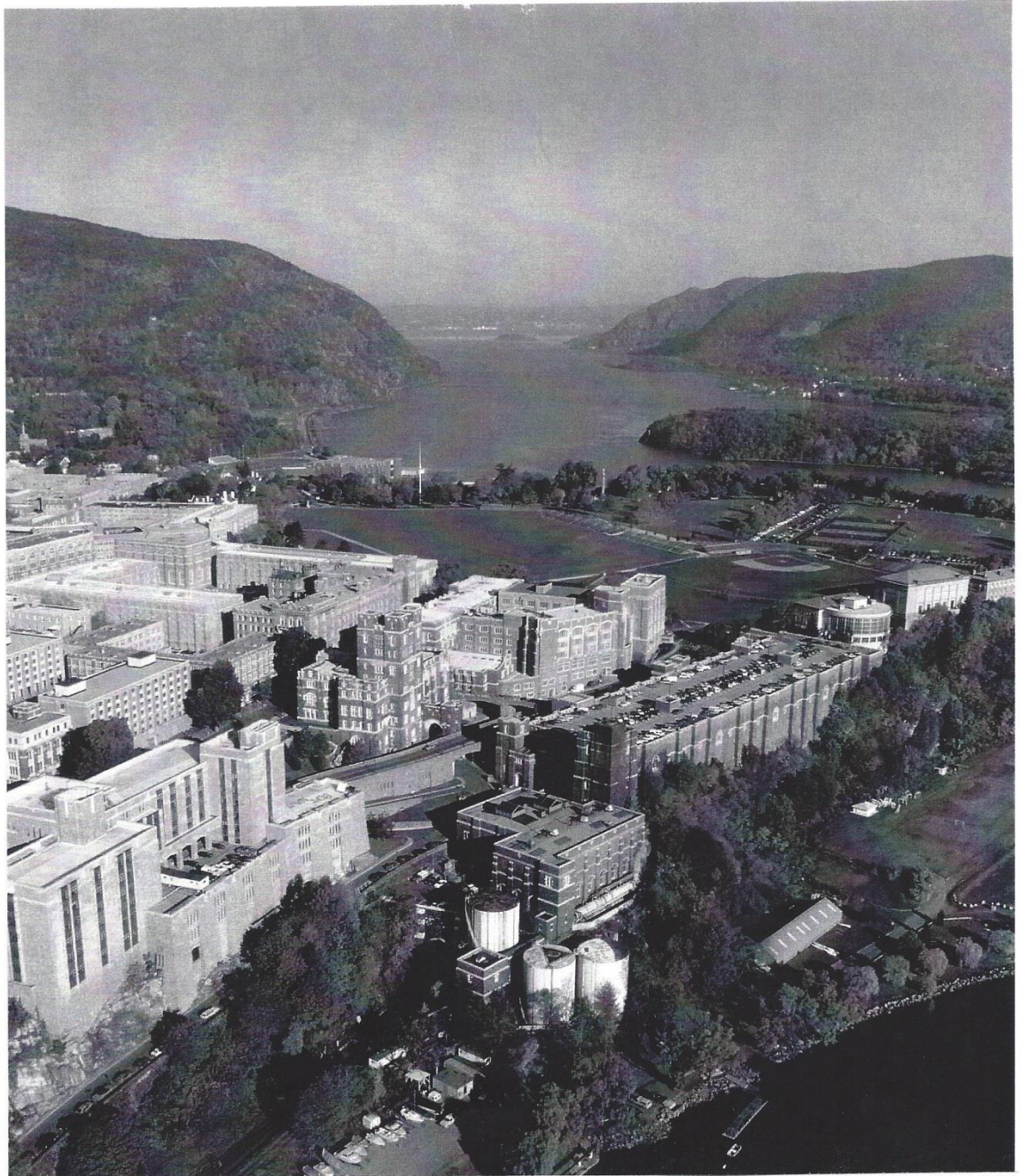
Conclusion

There have been many changes to the US Military Academy since 1960 when it was designated a National Historic Landmark District. Most of changes have been in the area of athletic venues, and many have had significant effects on the visual character of the historic landscape. Not only are these changes visible from the historic corridors of Thayer, Stony Lonesome and Washington Roads, within the Main Post, but also from the Hudson River, and from the Hudson River's east bank, where there historic houses, buildings and landscapes.

It has been noted that cadets who graduated in the 1960s and 1970s, and some even later, would not recognize their alma mater, due to the numerous changes that have been made to the academy. As well as the many new athletic facilities, both new and updated housing units have been added. In addition, some of the other changes not previously described included: 1) a new post exchange; 2) lighting upgrades along Washington Road; 3) major addition to the Keller Army Community Hospital; 4) security upgrades to Thayer, Stony Lonesome and Washington Gates; and 5) security upgrades to the West Point Elementary School (used by the children of academy personnel).

The US Military Academy at West Point on the Hudson River still remains (as some have put it) the 'crown jewel' of Army posts. The National Historic Landmark District has changed since 1960. While there have been instances of adverse effects, for the most part, the changes implemented have complied with the guidelines of the Keeper, the State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan.





Central Area, U.S. Military Academy

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